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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0432
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DEPARTMENT FOR PRM F/O, NEA/ELA, NEA/I

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DAMASCUS REFUGEE SITREP 5

11. (SBU) This is the fifth in a series of Embassy Damascus's updates on refugee processing in Syria.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: IOM reported its medical case load and out-processing projections for June through September 2008 and announced that all cases in WRAPS are now up to date. UNHCR met its FY2008 goal of 3900 individual referrals to DHS and told Elizabeth Harris, PRM/A, on 25 June that UNHCR would meet referral targets for the next DHS circuit ride beginning August 9. GAO wants to send a team to Damascus in July to look at assistance and resettlement efforts. We are also expecting a CDC team in August to meet with panel physicians.
END SUMMARY

13. (SBU) REFUGEE MEDICALS: At Post's first monthly meeting with IOM and the panel physicians in early June, the physicians agreed to continue to process the billing for medical cases that are referred to outside specialists. IOM projects that 700 cases will be sent to the physicians between 1 June and 7 July. IOM also noted a more balanced distribution of cases between the three Damascus-based physicians: 498, 438, and 432 cases for the period of 19 March through 26 May. The physicians were pleased with recent improvements in case distribution, operational communication with IOM and a more timely exchange of case files.

14. (SBU) RESETTLEMENT PROJECTIONS: IOM Damascus provided its projections for out-processing and resettlement of individuals through the end of FY 2008: 650 for June, 700 for July, 800 for August, and 1450 for September. Ibrahim Masaad, IOM Senior Operations Officer, added IOM Damascus had confirmed seats on air carriers for all the July cases, and it would soon confirm all the August and September cases.

15. (SBU) IOM DAMASCUS UPDATE: IOM reported that all WRAPS case files have been brought up to date to be concurrent with their physical case files. IOM staffers are now updating case files immediately in WRAPS to accurately reflect its status as it moves forward. Masaad attributed this to recent staff training in Amman and Cairo, adding that IOM has now moved out of its expansion and training phase and could increase its caseload. For FY 2008, as of 18 June, 1654 individuals had been processed and departed for the U.S. through IOM. IOM Damascus currently has six staff members at IOM Cairo to assist with the Damascus case load as well as four more individuals on loan to IOM Amman to assist with Amman's case load. Ibrahim noted that no shows for resettlement flights were less than one per cent of the total scheduled.

16. (SBU) UNHCR DELIVERS: Angela Murru, UNHCR Protection Officer, said that as of 6 June 2008, UNHCR had referred 4255

individuals for resettlement to the U.S. The goal of 3900 individuals for FY 2008 was met at the end of April.

¶17. (SBU) PRM AT IOM: PRM Program Officer Elizabeth Harris spent 25 June with IOM Damascus. She conducted a Town Hall meeting with IOM staff, and in discussions with Maria Rumman, IOM Damascus Chief, resolved that IOM would bring specific cases of incomplete medicals to the panel physicians' attention to improve the quality of medicals and facilitate final resettlement. While at IOM, Harris also met with Michelle Alfaro, UNHCR's newly-arrived Senior Resettlement Officer. Alfaro assured Harris that while UNHCR was currently concentrating on referrals to other countries' resettlement programs, UNHCR would be able to provide sufficient referrals for the August 9 - September 20 DHS circuit ride to Damascus.

¶18. (SBU) GAO VISIT: A five-member Government Accountability Office team has requested visas and country clearance to visit Damascus July 19 - 26. The team plans to review U.S. and international efforts to protect and assist Iraqi refugees. They have asked post to assist in identifying and arranging meetings with officials and organizations involved in assistance and resettlement.

¶19. (SBU) CDC VISIT: Three physicians from the Center for Disease Control will be in the region 25 July - 20 August. The Syria portion of their trip is 14 - 20 August. They will conduct outreach to panel physicians in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria and address increased fees and new TB technical instructions.

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